

measures for realization of hydro – technical and other infrastructure which are inseparable part of integral project development of protection, use and improvement of Drina River. Especially is important that analysis and evaluation of construction large hydro – energetic and other capital investments become integral development projects which will be realized in phases and in accordance with principle of reinvesting in development and improvement of total area to achieve to main aim of Euro region Drina that this area become “Ecological region of Europe”.

## REFERENCES

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## RURAL TOURISM QUALITY IN SPAIN: THE “Q” MARK

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## Abstract

The Spanish tourism stakeholders (State Tourism Administration, public tourism agencies, hospitality sector, recreational sector, travel operators, other touristic business, etc.) have developed a very powerful and practical quality certification system for all the actors in the tourism sector, including all those actors and activities in the rural tourism sector, which traditionally do not have a proper quality system [Cuellar 2009] bringing them to the mainstream of the Spanish tourism system. In this framework the Institute for Spanish Tourism Quality (ICTE) administers, manages and monitors the “Spanish Tourism Quality” “Q” Mark, as an exclusive brand that announces the quality of the activity and service provided by the certified tourist business.

## Introduction

The Spanish Tourism Quality System (ICTE) [ICTE 2012] initiative developed by the business sector and supported by the State Tourism Administration, is intended to supply the Spanish tourism industry with a tool allowing them to maintain and improve their competitive position. Fundamentally involves the development of a common working methodology for all tourism sub-sectors that are involved in improving the quality of its products and services. Institutional support to the implementation of the Spanish Tourism Quality “Q” Mark ensures recognition of the brand image of Spain as a quality destination. Private standards developed within the ICTE correspond to an intermediate level between ISO 9000 and Business Excellence Model (EFQM), with a philosophy of quality management and continuous improvement broader than that offered by the ISO

9000 series. This private standards are now been converted to public national ones (UNE) to reinforce the wide recognition of the certification [Alonso 2006].

The Q Mark so conceived provides: **PRESTIGE** (demonstrates the commitment of certified facility achieving full customer satisfaction), **DIFFERENTIATION** (Mark only be obtained by those establishments to ensure quality standards established), **RELIABILITY** (assessment of the compliance with the requirements stipulated by the rules is external and independent), **ACCURACY** (to get it is essential to prove evidence of an objective set out in the Standards) **AND PROMOTION** (to consumers)

Advantages that the mark “Q” provides to businesses are:

- Improving governance, which is reflected by the excellence of the product and hence competitiveness.
- Increase staff training, resulting in better and more motivation.
- Improved efficiency of the business.
- Increased customers’ satisfaction due to the Quality System to meet their expectations.
- Immersion in a continuous improvement process of the business.
- Recognized by the tourism industry and the customer.
- Using the “Q” as a means of promotion and marketing.

## Quality Standards

The certification requirements are established for the various services offered by public or private entities [Alonso 2006] which compliance is a condition for certification by the Spanish Tourism Quality Mark, “Q”. Standards of Quality of Service include two types of requirements, some related to the performance of different services and related systems, and others related to processes necessary to ensure the quality of services [Puig 2006, Lardies 2004].

The Service Quality Standards are mandatory for all tourism entities wishing to be certified by the Spanish Tourism Quality Mark.

The “Q” Mark applies today to the majority of sub sectors in tourism, and in particular to the ones involved in Rural Tourism [Cuellar 2009] like:

- Rural Accommodation and Resorts,
- Camping,
- Nature Reserves,
- Mountain Ski Resorts,
- Rural Hotels and Apartments,
- Tourist Information Centres,
- Restaurants,
- Tourist Transport by road,

• Activity Tourism.

### The Way to Quality

The Institute for Spanish Tourism Quality is a Spanish agency, private, independent, non-profit organization made up of national tourism associations in the country [ICTE 2012] such as Secretary of State for Tourism, the Autonomous Communities, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Counties, the Association for quality Rural Tourism among others, being responsible for certifying, manage and ensure the correct use of the "Q" Mark, acting as the sole benchmark for quality issues in the entire Spanish tourist industry.

The ICTE's objectives are to ensure that the Spanish tourism products and services quality levels comply with those established in the standards, and grant "Q" Mark certificates to business ensuring technical consistency of all quality systems.

The main responsibilities of the ICTE are as follow:

**Standardization:** Creation, development, updating and revision of the Standards of Tourism Quality adapted to the market and support to the tourism sectors for the development of new UNE (Spanish Public Quality Standards) standards related to tourism.

**Certification:** Recognition of the efforts made by the business in the tourism sector to implement the quality system, with the award of the Seal of the Spanish Tourism Quality, the "Q" Mark logo and brand.

**Promotion:** Of the Spanish Tourism Quality and its brand the "Q" Mark, as a visible seal and sign to be used in buildings, advertising, exhibitions, presentations, publications, press releases, newsletters, etc..

**Education:** Organization of training courses for all the stakeholders in the sector, on-line training and class-room training for users and consultants, auditors, tourism professionals, experts in tourism quality and university students.

The tourist organizations which adhere to the certification process and follow up the improvement quality cycle will be able to get the following benefits:

- Ensure quality of products and services offered.
- Increase and manage customer loyalty.
- Motivate staff.
- Optimize resources.
- To prevent risks.
- Reduce costs.
- Promotion.

For example of the standards content, the quality requirements for Rural Houses are:

## RURAL HOUSES STANDARD

**Management:** Similar to ISO9000 QS Guidelines. Include Quality Policy, Human Resources Responsibility & Training, Documentation QS, Customer Satisfaction Management.

**Equipment:** What minimum facilities and dimensions for the rooms are required.

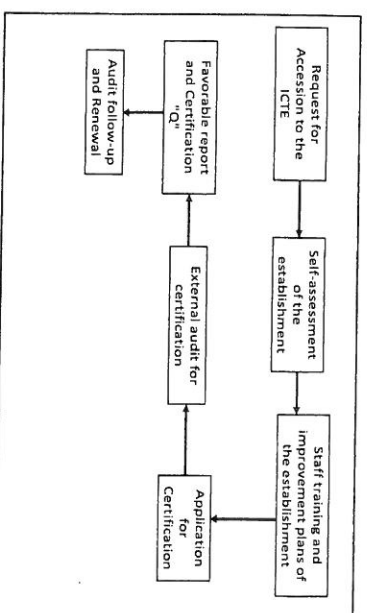
**Arrival and Stay Process:** All aspects related to Guest Management and information about the services provided. Also other services and amenities provided around the location.

**Cleaning and Maintenance:** All facilities and processes required to keep with health and security standards and good hospitality practices.

**Promotion:** All about marketing and guarantees to users.

### The Certification Process

The process for the Certification of tourism entities through the Quality Mark is governed by a sequential process of activities, some related to the entity requesting certification, and another to the ICTE [ICTE 2012]. These activities, the description and characteristics listed in the various regulations and processes developed that make up the overall process of certification of tourism entities, are outlined in the following diagram:



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## RURAL TOURISM 2.0: SOUTHERN EUROPEAN CASES

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### ABSTRACT

This work deals with the new trends in tourism and the effect of ICT on the tourism management. The article is focused on the rural tourism development. Three different countries cases are exposed with the main webs the reader can consult. The countries are in the Southern Europe: France, Italy and Spain. Everyone can navigate through the webs and take his own conclusions.

### 1. NEW TRENDS IN TOURISM.

As people travel more, they also become more aware of the culture and environment of the places they travel to, and they reflect more on their own experience and lifestyle.

As tourism develops, so, there seems to be a shift away purely external travel determinant (such as demography and climate) towards internal determinants. People are therefore becoming career travelers, demanding an endless flow of new experiences, and looking for deeper experiences within the communities they visit.

Experienced travelers are well versed in the organizational aspects of their trips and the reservation/booking systems that service them. And they will demand higher quality experiences and service at all levels of expenditure.

About the trends in marketing, consumers are seeking advice from other consumers through the Internet (e.g. blogs) and the "skilled consumers" are increasingly likely to know more about niche products than many travel professionals.

As a consequence, we could underline three main aspects for the tourist sector, such as:

- a) The Internet will drive the next generation of travel/tourism product distribution methods. At present, take-up in the tourism sector appears slow, as shown in a recent UNWTO survey which indicate that

only 3% of the NTO marketing budgets are spent on internal advertising. The Internet is still seen as a source of "free" advertising, rather than as a medium which has to be used creatively and strategically in a competitive environment.

- b) As Internet is a "pull" medium, it will become increasingly important to know more about the motivations and interests of consumers segments in order to draw attention to information posted on it. This gives greater importance on segmentation and positioning.

- c) In the same way, it will become more important to identify and exploit the unique selling propositions (USPs) of products. As consumers become more oriented towards experiences and their symbolic value, these USPs will also need to be expanded into the realms of unique experiential selling propositions (UESPs) and unique symbolic selling propositions (USSPs).

### 2. TOURISM 2.0 PARADIGM.

Tourism 2.0 is the business revolution in the tourism and leisure industry caused by the move to the tourist ecosystem as platform, and an attempt to understand the rules for success on that new platform. Chief among those rules is this: Build business and destinations that "harness" network effects to get more productive the more people and business participate. So, it is such a "harnessing collective intelligence".

In a study of the comparisons between multimedia online sales and offline sales, Brynjolfsson, Hu and Smith (2010) and Anderson (2006) reached the conclusion that the digitalization of contents and products and their sale via online media is going to have an effect on the economic model that goes beyond the mere transfer of the distribution channel. This model is known as "the long tail" (Anderson, 2006).

In the offline world, the distribution of products follows *Pareto's Principle* (any offer generates its own demand) which in turn is based on the power law (Anderson, 2006). Pareto's Principle proposes that the distribution model generates a centrifuge effect which is reinforced by the dynamics of the offer in the physical world. The birth of the online channel, which entails practically no distribution or marketing costs, permits the minority (products that were discontinued or unsold, in many cases), to access the same distribution channel, thus increasing the size of the market.

### 3. SOUTHERN CASES. RURAL TOURISM 2.0

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